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Title: Ecoregions and the challenge of integrating organic and agroecological approaches for local agrifood development. Insights from Argentinian, Serbian and Italian cases.

Abstract:

The International Network of Ecoregions (IN.N.E.R), defines a Eco-Region or Bio-district as "the innovative territories where farmers, citizens, public authorities and other local actors establish a formal agreement aimed at the sustainable management of local resources, based on the principles of organic farming and agroecology, in order to boost the economic and socio-cultural development of their territory. "

Eco-Regions are marked by a multifunctional farming approach in which each presents singular lifestyles, cultural and social relations and specific natural environments. The development process can either be top down or bottom up; in most cases both approaches are part of the institutional relationship between the stakeholders.

At the same time, its development can be endogenous: which means closely to food sovereignty concepts based on accessible, healthy and quality food for local populations and an exogenous one, centered on high value products for external markets and tourism. In many cases the endogenous is more related with agroecological approaches and exogenous with organic ones.

Regionalization cannot follow a common pattern in all territories; as example, in many regions of Latin America large geographical and productive extensions coexist with low demographic concentrations far from large urban centers, meanwhile in others the proximity between production and consumption can generate very different characteristics at the bioregion scales and territorial dimensions.

We analyzed different cases from Argentina, Italy and Serbia identifying different patterns on exogenous/endogenous and organic/agroecological interrelations in terms of research, practices, market approach, representativeness and guarantee systems.

We conclude that for developing an Eco-Region with a deep neo endogenous process which could integrate harmonized positive endogenous and exogenous outputs at the territorial level, the coexistence and assemblage of different organic and agroecological approaches and the agreement on common and articulated processes are essential for achieving successful initiatives.

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